

TESTIMONY

Submitted by Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO
The Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home

Public Health Committee Public Hearing
March 29, 2021

SUPPORT: **SB 1070 AN ACT ALLOWING ADVANCED PRACTICE REGISTERED NURSES AND PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS TO ISSUE HOME HEALTH ORDERS.**

SUPPORT: **HB 6666 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING VARIOUS REVISIONS TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH STATUTES.**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Tracy Wodatch, President and CEO of the Connecticut Association for Healthcare at Home. The Association is the united voice for the DPH licensed, skilled home health and hospice agencies.

The Association and its members support SB1070 An Act Allowing APRNs and PAs to Issue Home Health Orders

Historically, both federal and state regulations have not allowed an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) or a Physician Assistant (PA) to sign orders for home health care or to certify home health eligibility for a patient. Such functions (orders and eligibility) have been purely reserved for a physician, which has proven to be a significant limitation and one that the Association has been advocating to change both on the national and the state level for nearly a decade.

Enter COVID-19 back in March of 2020 when thankfully our federal government passed the CARES Act which included **permanent** allowances for both APRNs and PAs to sign home health orders and to determine home health eligibility for coverage. However, these allowances are contingent upon each states' regulations and statutes.

In Connecticut, neither APRNs or PAs was allowed to perform said functions, which prompted our immediate advocacy to the DPH commissioner who did release an order effective April 27, 2020 expanding these allowances to include APRNs and PAs (see attached order). This order is only in effect through the Governor's declared Public Health and Civil Preparedness Emergency.

Our goal in Connecticut, through bills such as SB 1028 An Act Concerning Physician Assistants' Scope of Practice heard last week before your committee and SB 1070 An Act Allowing Advanced Practice Registered Nurses and Physician Assistants to Issue Home Health Orders, is to ensure these allowances for PAs and APRNs become permanent without any gaps in time between the end of the public health emergency and passage of this bill.

In addition, I would like to comment on HB 6666 An Act Concerning the Department of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Various Revisions to the Public Health Statutes specifically all references to the new language added as "Hospice Home Health Care Agencies." Our Association is working with DPH to update our regulations which will include separating out hospice from home health. Currently, in order to be license as a hospice provider, one must first be licensed as a home health care agency.



We are the only state in the union to require this. Moving forward, we are hoping to have two sets of regulations, one for Home Health Care and one for Hospice.

I believe this is the reason for adding such language to HB 6666; however, we would like to recommend a different term—either Hospice Agency, Hospice Program or Hospice Care Agency. Other states use these terms. None use Hospice Home Health Care Agency. The reality is that we provide hospice services in a variety of venues—private homes, assisted living, group homes, residential care homes, nursing homes, the hospital and in-patient hospice facilities. It seems more appropriate to use Hospice Agency, Hospice Care Agency or Hospice Program, not Hospice Home Health Care Agency.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on these issues.

Tracy Wodatch

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